Agricultural Overview

The sales value generated by California agriculture increased by 4.6 percent between the 2012 and 2013 crop years. The State's 77,900 farms and ranches received $46.4 billion for their output, up from the $44.3 billion received in 2012. California's increase in revenue was led by the dairy industry followed by the almond and grape industries, respectively.

Almond cash receipts improved for the fourth consecutive year as revenue increased to $5.77 billion. Cash receipts increased 19.8 percent due to increased production as well as a rise in prices from $2.58 per pound of almonds in 2012 to $3.21 per pound in 2013. Grape production generated $5.59 billion in cash receipts in 2013, up 8 percent from last year's record high. Production increased by 13 percent from 2012, but prices received by growers decreased from $756 per ton of grapes in 2012 to $719 per ton in 2013. Revenue generated from the cattle sector receded from last year's record high as cash receipts were $3.05 billion for the year. Receipts decreased more than 4 percent from 2012 as production decreased 3 percent.

The dairy industry, California's leading commodity in cash receipts, generated $7.62 billion for milk production in 2012, up 10 percent from 2012 but below the record year of 2011. Milk production decreased by more than 1 percent, but a rise in prices resulted in an overall increase in cash receipts for the crop year. Milk prices received by producers rose from $16.52 per hundred pounds of milk sold in 2012 to $18.48 in 2013. As the leading dairy producing state in the country, California produced nearly 21 percent of the nation's supply in 2013.

California remained the leading state in cash farm receipts in 2013 with combined commodities representing nearly 12 percent of the U.S. total. California's leading crops remained fruits, nuts and vegetables. Over a third of the country's vegetables and two-thirds of the country's fruits and nuts were produced in California.

Notable Increases in California Value of Production:

Pecans 52%
Cabbage, Fresh Market 51%
Peppers, Bell 45%
Broccoli 34%
Almonds 33%
Melons, Honeydew 30%
Celery 30%
Corn, Fresh Market Sweet 28%
Peppers, Chili 27%
Potatoes, Fall 26%

Notable Decreases in California Value of Production:

Oats .....-46%
Cucumbers Fresh Market .....-38%
Peppermint .....-36%
Barley.....-30%
Peaches, Freestone .....-29%
Cottonseed .....-23%
Plums.....-22%
Dates .....-19%
Wheat .....-19%
Grapefruits .....-18%

Farm Facts

In 2013, 77,900 farms operated in California, which is unchanged from 2012 and 3.7 percent of the national total. More than 26 percent of California farms generated commodity sales over $100,000, greater than the national average of 19 percent. The amount of land devoted to farming and ranching in California decreased slightly to 25.5 million acres in 2013 from 25.6 million acres in 2012. The average farm size decreased from 329 acres to 327, which is below the national average of 435 acres.

Land Values/Cash Rents

The average value of California farm real estate increased slightly in 2013 to $6,900 per acre. Irrigated cropland's value increased 2.6 percent to $11,800 per acre and non-irrigated cropland increased slightly to $3,400 per acre. The value of all cropland increased 4.9 percent to $9,860. The value of pastureland decreased slightly from the 2012 level to $2,650 per acre.

The rental rate of irrigated cropland increased slightly to $365 per acre, up from $340 per acre in 2012. Non-irrigated rental rates decreased by 25 percent to $30 per acre, down from $40 per acre in 2012. Pastureland rental rates increased from 2012 rental rates, up to $12 per acre in 2013 from $11.50 in 2012.

Top Commodities

California's top 20 crop and livestock commodities accounted for more than $38.7 billion in value in 2013. Twelve commodities exceeded $1 billion in value in 2013. The cash receipts of twelve of the top twenty commodities increased in value between 2012 and 2013. The growth in the cash receipts of almonds overshadowed that of grapes as almonds became the second leading revenue-generating commodity in California. Grower returns are subject to change and could result in an updated dollar amount in next year's report.

Weather Highlights for 2013

The year began with freezing temperatures across Northern California and the Central Valley. A short lived high pressure ridge kept a cold air mass over California resulting in freezing temperatures into Southern California. Growth was slowed due to cool temperatures however, crop conditions continued to be rated mostly good to excellent. In mid-January a strong temperature inversion trapped cold air in the valleys, while higher elevations enjoyed sunny and warm conditions. Light precipitation fell across the state but the South received heavier precipitation as the low pressure, which had settled off the southern coast, drew up subtropical moisture, resulting in widespread moderate to heavy rains at times. February was characterized by increasing temperatures and some light moisture across the state. Cooler than average temperatures persisted and almost no precipitation fell throughout the month. A series of low pressure systems moved through the State from the Gulf of Alaska and swept southward down the Central Valley and into Southern California. The cold, unstable air mass generated some severe thunderstorms and even spawned several small tornadoes in the Central Valley. Rainfall amounts at the lower elevations were fairly limited, usually less than half an inch. The cold nature of the storms meant snow levels were unusually low, down to 2000 feet. Irrigation began in vegetable and fruit crops due to lack of significant rain.

As March began, two rather weak storm systems brushed extreme Northern California and brought some rain to the North Coast, and isolated light showers to the northern mountains, but generally, conditions across California remained dry. Very little precipitation reached Southern California. Towards the middle of the month, an upper-level low pressure system from the Gulf of Alaska spreading showers across the State. There was widespread shower activity across the northern half of the state, while Southern California remained mostly dry and mild. Some particularly heavy rains come to the extreme southwest portions of the State. This was the last widespread precipitation until the end of March and as the pressure system moved on, temperatures warmed. In Southern California record breaking high temperatures in the mid and upper 90s were reported. Towards the end of the month localized precipitation fell in the Central Valley, the North Coast and the Sierras.

During the beginning of April, a low pressure system moved through Central California spreading light to moderate rain. A series of weak storms brought some active weather across Northern California with thunderstorms producing lightning, hail, and even a funnel cloud in Tehama County. Showers delayed planting progress; however, producers were pleased with the additional precipitation winter crops received. Strong winds resulted in some damage to orchards and vineyards. Dry north winds reduced rangeland soil moisture. Towards the end of the month, much of the State experienced temperatures several degrees above average with some locations running 10 to 15 degrees above normal temperatures. Many valley locations would check in temperatures above 90 degrees for the first time and southern desert locations topping100 degrees.

Beginning in May, dry soils and fuels, combined with warm and occasionally windy conditions helped initiate and spread the Panther fire in Northern California and the Spring fire in Southern California. Rain amounts were generally light, but there were isolated areas that received rainfall for short periods. High and low pressure systems moved across the state throughout the month resulting in temperature variations but not very many extremes.

June began with an active and wet late spring pattern was present in Northern California through the first half of the week as low pressure systems generated rainfall for areas north of Modesto with cooling temperatures for areas farther south. Rainfall totals included over an inch and a half for far northern coastal areas and nearly an inch in the northern Sierra Nevada. Southern and Central California saw little to no rainfall. Triple digit heat was reported all across the Central Valley and the southern interior deserts were also quite hot through this period. The dry and warm conditions aided in the development of field crops and vegetables but resulted in deterioration of rangeland and pasture. Cotton and rice development was responding well to warmer weather. In mid-June, nearly eight thousand strikes were recorded in 48 hours and sparked over sixty fires stretching from the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the coastal range in Sonoma and Napa Counties.

July began with high temperatures across interior Northern California ranging from near 105 up to 110 degrees. Hot temperatures caused an increase in irrigation for all crops and many high temperature records were broken across the State. Monsoonal moisture became entrained in the circulation around the high pressure center and resulted in widely scattered thunderstorm activity in the mountains and deserts. The deterioration of range and non-irrigated pasture from fair to very poor conditions continued. Fire danger was high with red flag warnings in several locations due to the high temperatures, wind and low humidity. There was a growing concern over diminishing watering holes in the foothills of the Sierras.

There was a low pressure system off the Pacific Northwest coast keeping daytime high temperatures below normal for late July to early August in the Central Valley. Cotton progressed well due to high temperatures. Growers continued to irrigate fruit trees and vines to reduce heat stress. Mid-month a low pressure system moving northeastward through Oregon and a high pressure ridge centered over Arizona resulted in a slight warming trend for the interior portions of the state. This system triggered afternoon and evening thunderstorm activity over the deserts and mountains. Rain from thunderstorms brought flooding concerns for portions of Southern California throughout the end of the month.

High temperatures and light precipitation continued throughout September. Towards the end of the month, temperatures began to trend downward statewide and were followed by an early season moist low pressure system that developed off the North Coast. This low pressure system then moved across the northern and central areas of the State with some of the first significant rains of the season. Rainfall amounts totaled over two and a half inches across some areas of Shasta County and the northern Sierra Nevada. This system was cool enough to generate 2 to 5 inches of snowfall on the higher peaks. Rain events resulted in some fields lodging and slowed harvest progress.

From mid-October a high pressure ridge caused moderate temperatures and minimal rainfall. Towards the end of the month a low pressure system that originated in the Gulf of Alaska, brought strong wind gusts throughout the State and wet snow to the Sierra Nevada. Beginning in November, A series of weak low pressure systems brushed Northern California and brought scattered light rain to the North Coast. Mid-month pressure systems brought light rain to Southern California and cooler temperatures to the entire State. The lingering low pressure kept some cloudiness across Southern California over the weekend while Northern and Central California had mostly sunny conditions. Towards the end of the month, a system spread rain across the State. Winds spread into Southern California and generated a Santa Ana wind episode in the Southland.

Mild weather persisted early December but this changed when two cold fronts from the north brought a cold air mass into the State. This system brought light showers and freezing temperatures to the State, mostly across the higher elevations. This brought widespread snow with significant accumulations down to the valley floor in Shasta County and snow down to 1,000 feet across the central and southern Sierra foothills. Freezing low temperatures persisted and dipped to the lower and mid 20 degrees across the Central Valley and into the Imperial Valley. Overnight low temperatures plummeted to below zero in the Northeastern Plateau. The State remained mostly dry and returning Santa Ana winds brought fire weather concerns to the Southland during the weekend. The latter part of the month experienced no significant precipitation, a very unusual situation. Daytime temperatures were generally above normal all across California during the closing weeks of 2013.